

REMARKS

This paper is responsive to the Office Action mailed from the Patent and Trademark Office on September 28, 2005, which has a six-month statutory period set to expire March 28, 2006. A three-month extension is submitted in a petition filed herewith.

Claims 1-34 were pending in the above-identified application. Claims 1-34 stand rejected under 35 USC 102 and/or 35 USC 103 and/or Double Patenting.

In the current paper, Claims 1, 21 and 26 are amended for clarity—the scope of these claims is believed not to be changed by these amendments. Claims 2-20, 22-25 and 27-34 remain as filed. No new matter is entered. In view of these amendments and the following remarks, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of all pending claims.

Claims

Double Patenting Rejection

Claims 1-34 are rejected under the judicially created doctrine of double patenting over Claims 1-34 of U.S. Patent No. 6,745,223.

A Terminal Disclaimer is filed herewith, thus obviating this rejection. Reconsideration and withdrawal is therefore requested.

Rejections Under 35 USC 102

In paragraphs 3-14 of the Office Action, Claims 1, 3-4, 6-11, 17, 21 and 26 are rejected under 35 USC 102(e) as being anticipated by Lin et al. (US 6,381,748 B1; herein "Lin").

Lin discloses an apparatus and methods for network access using a set top box 112 in which communications between the set top box and an Internet site are passed through a server (headend) 110. In this, all information from an Internet site transmitted to box 112 passes through headend server 110:

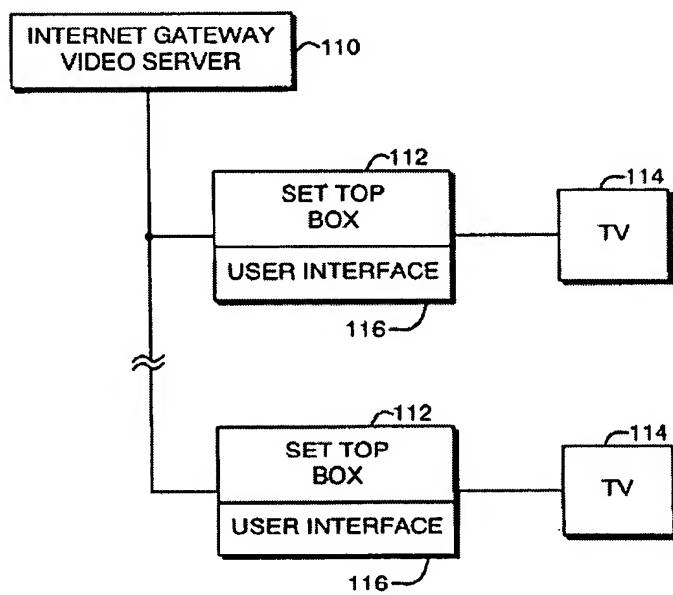


FIG. 1

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FIG. 1 is a block diagram showing a preferred embodiment of the invention. Televisions 114 are connected to set top boxes 112 which send video signals to television 114. Set top boxes 112 are also connected to Internet gateway video server 110 via a television distribution system, and receive frames from Internet gateway video server 110 for display on television 114. Each set top box 112 is individually addressable, and sends information to server 110 which identifies the particular source set top box 112.

In a preferred embodiment, server 110 is located at source end of a television signal, such as a cable system. For example, server 110 may be located at the headend of a television distribution system. Alternatively, server 110 may be located at some other location on the television distribution line. For example, server 110 may be located in an apartment building or hotel between an incoming television distribution line and set top boxes 112. In this manner, "local" Internet access is provided. Moreover, server 110 may perform functions in addition to providing Internet access. For example, server 110 may be dedicated to providing Internet access to set top boxes 112. Alternatively, server 110 may also receive a regular television distribution signal for transmission to set top boxes 112, and provide Internet-related signals or other programming, depending upon the channel selection by the user.

A problem with the system taught by Lin is that when a large number of access requests are transmitted at the same time (i.e., by a large number of set top boxes), then server 110 can become overwhelmed, causing a transmission bottleneck that degrades service to set top boxes 112.

In addition, Lin teaches that the server 110, not the set top box 112, generates and/or stores the Internet addresses that are used to access a site requested by a user through the set top box 112 (see Fig. 2 and column 4, lines 5-31, copied below for reference):

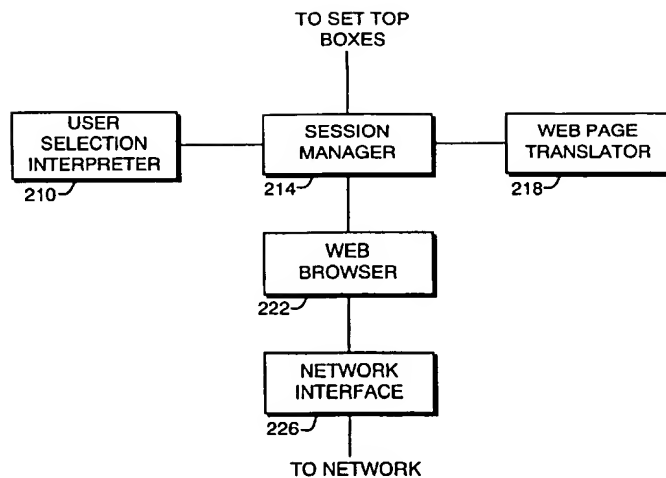


FIG. 2

FIG. 2 shows the general architecture of the server 110 in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention. Session manager 214 manages the overall information flow within server 110. This includes reception of user selection signals from the set top boxes 112, translations of user request signals, requests for Web pages, translation of Web pages, and transmission of television information to set top boxes 112. In general, session manager 214 keeps track of requests from the user, requests to the web browser, menu presentation, and web page presentation. Session manager 214 receives information from the cable and transmits information to the cable.

In response to user selection signals, session manager 214 either responds directly to the user selection signals or requests translation of the user selection signals by user selection interpreter 210. Interpreter 210 translates user selection signals into Web page addresses. The Web page addresses are sent to manager 214.

In response to the translation, session manager 214 requests Web browser 222 to retrieve a Web page from the network via network interface 226. Once the Web page has been received, it is sent to session manager 214, which requests translation of the Web page by web page translator 218. After translation, the results are transferred to manager 214. Manager 214 then passes at least part of the translated Web page to the set top box 112 associated with the user request.

That the server generates/stores the the Internet addresses that are used to access a site requested by a user is further discussed in column 5, lines 57-65 (copied below for reference):

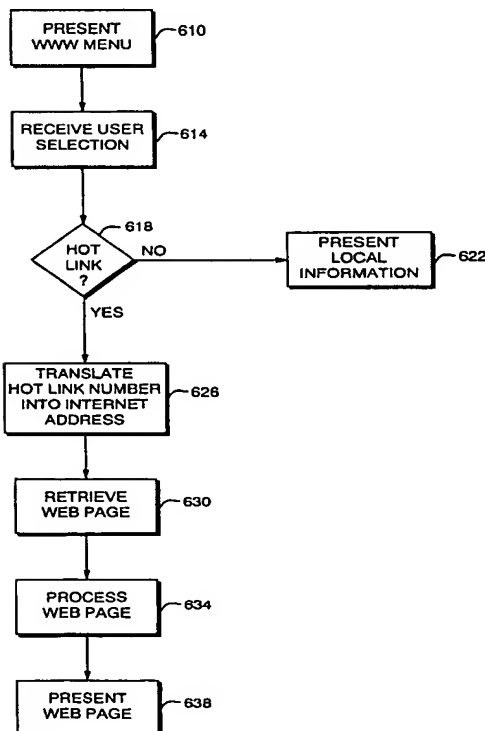


FIG. 6

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FIG. 6 is a flow chart showing the overall processing performed by server 110. The user is first presented with a menu (step 610). A user selection from the menu is then received (step 614). The user selection will either be a Web page request requiring Web access (step 618), or a selection which requires that information be generated locally by Internet gateway video server 110 and sent to the appropriate set top box 112 (step 622). Locally generated information may include, for example, menus and administrative information related to a user's service.

If the user selects a WWW page, the user Web page selection is translated into an Internet address (step 626). Server 110 retrieves the Web page associated with the translated Internet address (step 630). The Web page is then processed to transform the Web-based format into signals suitable for display on television 114 (step 634). The processed Web page is then transmitted to television 114 via set top box 112 and displayed to the user (step 638).

In contrast to Lin, the present invention is directed to a user terminal in a channel-based network that overcomes the bottleneck problems associated with the system of Lin by facilitating direct communication between each user terminal and associated Internet sites (i.e., not through a headend server). That is, as indicated below with reference to Applicants' Fig. 1, all communications between user terminals 130-A through 130-D and Internet sites 120-1 through 120-4 are transmitted over the Internet.

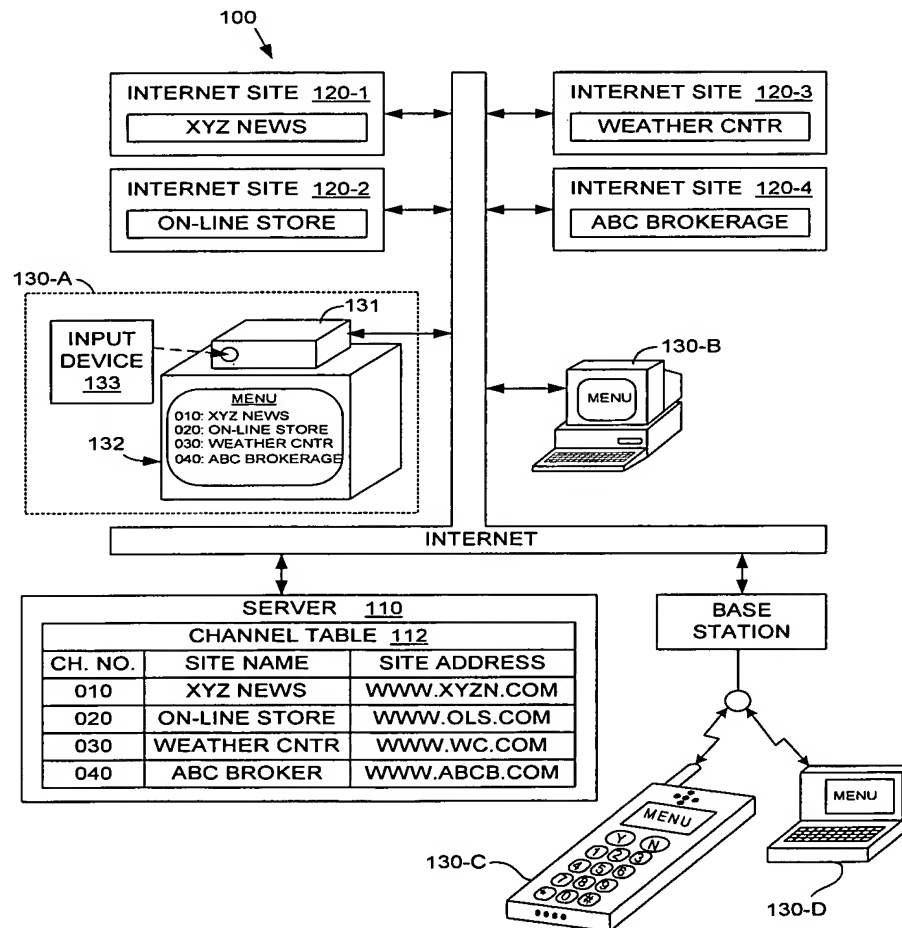


FIG. 1

Claim 1 is distinguished over Lin's set top box 12 in that Claim 1 recites (in pertinent part):

A user terminal of a channel-based network, the user terminal comprising:
...means for reading the Internet address associated with the selected channel

number from the memory circuit, and for connecting the user terminal to a selected Internet site that is addressed by the Internet address associated with the selected channel number such that communications between the user terminal and the selected Internet site are transmitted only via the Internet.

The above-quoted language from Claim 1 is clearly distinguished over Lin because Lin fails to teach or suggest "means ... for connecting the user terminal to a selected Internet site that is addressed by the Internet address associated with the selected channel number such that communications between the user terminal and the selected Internet site are transmitted only via the Internet", as recited in Claim 1.

Further, Claim 1 is amended to clarify that the "user terminal" includes "a memory circuit that is configured to store a channel table, the channel table including a plurality of channel numbers and a plurality of Internet Addresses, each said channel number having an associated said Internet address and an associated Internet site name". As such Claim 1 is further distinguished over Lin because, as set forth above, Lin fails to teach or suggest a "a memory circuit that is configured to store...a plurality of Internet Addresses" as recited in Claim 1.

Claims 3-4, 6-11, and 17 are dependent from Claim 1, and are therefore distinguished over the cited prior art for at least the reasons provided above with reference to Claim 1.

Similar to Claim 1, Claim 21 recites (in pertinent part):

...means ... for transmitting the associated Internet address via the communication circuitry directly onto the Internet, thereby connecting the user terminal to a selected Internet site that is addressed by the associated Internet address such that communications between the user terminal and the selected Internet site are transmitted directly over the Internet.

In addition, similar to Claim 1, Claim 21 is amended to clarify that the "user terminal" includes "a memory circuit that is configured to store a channel table, the channel table including a plurality of channel numbers and a plurality of Internet Addresses, each said channel number having an associated said Internet address and an associated Internet site name."

In view of this amendment and originally recited language, Claim 21 is believed to be distinguished over Lin for at least the reasons provided above with reference to Claim 1.

Similar to Claims 1 and 21, Claim 26 recites (in pertinent part):

...means for transmitting the Internet address from the downloaded channel table directly onto the Internet when the first channel number is entered by the user, thereby connecting the user terminal to the Internet site such that communications between the user terminal and the selected Internet site are transmitted directly over the Internet.

As such, Claim 26 is believed to be distinguished over Lin for at least the reasons provided above with reference to Claim 1.

Claim 26 is further distinguished over Lin in that Claim 26 recites "means for downloading a channel table from the system server via the Internet". As pointed out above, headend server 110 of Lin's system is connected between the Internet and set top boxes 112, and therefore clearly does not transmit channel information to set top boxes 112 "via the Internet", as recited in Claim 26.

For the above reasons, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the pending rejections under 35 USC 102.

Rejections Under 35 USC 103

Rejections in view of Lin

In paragraphs 15-28 of the Office Action, Claims 2, 12-16, 18-20, 22-25 and 27-34 are rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over Lin.

Claims 2, 12-16, 18 and 19 are dependent from independent Claim 1, Claims 22-25 are dependent from independent Claim 21, and Claims 27 and 28 are dependent from independent Claim 26. Independent Claims 1, 21, and 26 are believed to be patentable over Lin at least because it would not have been obvious to modify the system taught by Lin to meet the limitations of these amended claims (i.e., Lin neither teaches nor suggests transmitting information from an Internet site directly to set top boxes 112 such that the information does not pass through server 110, and Lin fails to teach or suggest storage of Internet addresses in the set top boxes). Therefore, dependent Claims 18, 19, 22-25, 27 and 28 are distinguished over Lin for at least the reasons provided above with reference to Claims 1, 21, and 26.

Claim 29 recites that the channel table is downloaded from a "system server via the Internet", which is neither taught nor suggested by Lin. Further, Claim 29 clearly recites that user terminal is "configured to store a user channel table, the user channel table including a plurality of channel numbers, associated Internet addresses and associated Internet site names". Therefore, Claim 29 is believed to be distinguished over Lin for reasons similar to those provided above.

Claims 30 and 31 are dependent from independent Claim 29, and are therefore distinguished over Lin for at least the reasons provided above with reference to Claim 29.

Similar to Claim 29, Claim 32 recites a "user terminal including a non-volatile memory circuit storing a user channel table, wherein each of the master channel table and the user channel table include a plurality of channel numbers, associated Internet addresses" and "downloading the master channel table

from the system server via the Internet", and is therefore believed to be distinguished over Lin for at least the reasons provided above with reference to Claim 29.

Claims 33 and 34 are dependent from independent Claim 32, and are therefore distinguished over Lin for at least the reasons provided above with reference to Claim 32.

Rejections over Lin in view of Rosin

In paragraphs 32-34 of the Office Action, Claim 5 is rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over Lin in view of Rosin et al. (US 6,397,387 B1; herein Rosin).

Claims 5 is dependent from Claim 1, and is believed to be distinguished of Lin for at least the reasons set forth with respect to Claim 1. Rosin is cited for teaching "an associated parental guidance code", and fails to overcome the deficiencies of Lin discussed above. Accordingly, it would not have been obvious to combine the teachings of Lin and Rosin to produce the method recited in Applicants' Claim 5.

For the above reasons, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 USC 103.

CONCLUSION

Claims 1-34 are pending in the present Application.
Reconsideration and allowance Claims 1-34 is respectfully
requested.

Respectfully submitted,



Customer No. 022888

Patrick T. Bever
Attorney for Applicants
Reg. No. 33,834
408-451-5902

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as FIRST CLASS MAIL in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450 Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on March 28, 2006.

Date: 3/28/2006 Signature: Rebecca A. Baumann
Rebecca A. Baumann